

Ex 1-1 to 6-1 Torah Reading (Parshat Shemot)
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version January 5, 2021

1:1 [The following are] the names of the children of Israel, who came to Egypt—coming with Jacob: each with his own household came.
2, 3, & 4 2 Reuben and Simeon, Leyi and Judah, 3 Issachar and Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.
5 [And there were]— [of all the souls]—who came out from the thigh of Jacob, seventy souls, [including Joseph] who was then in Egypt.
6 [Then died] Joseph [and all of his brothers], and all of that generation.
7 *B'nei Yisrael* [were very fruitful] [and grew in numbers]. They increased and grew mighty in number exceedingly.
Filled was the land with them.
8 There arose a new king over Egypt, one who did not know Joseph.
9 [He said this] to his people: “[See what has happened]. [This people]—*B'nei Yisrael*—is more numerous and powerful than we are.
10 Let us then deal wisely with them, [lest they increase], [and it will happen]
[if there should be] a war, [they will become] joined to our enemies [and make war upon us] and rise up from the land.
11 [And they set] [over them] commanders of work-companies in order to afflict them with hard labor.
[Thus they built] cities [as supply centers] for Pharaoh, the cities Pithom and Ra'amses.
12 But the more they did afflict them, the more they increased, and the more they spread, [so that they felt dread] before [the children of Israel].
13 [Thus made to labor] [by the Egyptians], the Israelites [were treated harshly].
14 Embittered were their lives with servitude [hard to endure], involving mortar and bricks and with all kinds of work in the fields.
Indeed all of their labor which they did for them was oppressive.
15 Once spoke the king of Egypt to the midwives among the Hebrews,
of whom the name of the first was Shifra and the name of the second was Puah.
16 [He said to them], “[When you help to give birth] [the Hebrew women], you must look to the birthstool.
If it is a boy, you must kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.”
17 [But what they feared]—the midwives—was *Elohim*, so they did not do [according to what] was spoken to them by the king of Egypt,
[end aliyah] and they kept alive all of the children.

1:18 Then called the king of Egypt for the midwives, and asked of them, “Why have you done the deed I have seen? You have kept alive all the children.”

19 Then spoke the midwives to Pharaoh, “Since [not at all] [like the woman] of the Egyptians are the Hebrews. Like animals are they: before [there should come] [over to them] a midwife, [they have given birth]!”

20 And good was God to the midwives. [Increased in numbers] [the people became], and grew strong exceedingly.

21 [And so it was] because the midwives feared God that God gave to them households.

22 And commanded Pharaoh all his people by saying, “Every boy [that will be born], in the Nile you must throw him, [end aliyah] [but every girl child] [you shall let live].

2:1 There went a man, from the house of Levi, [and took as a wife] a daughter of Levi.

2 The woman became pregnant, [and gave birth] to a son. When [she saw him]—how fine he was, she kept him hidden for three months.

3 [When she could] [not any longer] [conceal him], [she took for him] a basket made of bulrushes, coated it with asphalt and pitch placed inside it the child, and put it in the reeds, near the bank of the Nile.

4 There stood her sister at a distance, [so that she might know] what [might then befall him].

5 Then went down [the daughter of Pharaoh] to bathe in the Nile, while her maids were walking alongside the river.

She saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her slave-girl to fetch it.

6 [When she opened it] she saw the child, [and here was a boy] who was crying.

She had compassion for him [and she then said], “One of the children of the Hebrews, this is.”

7 [Then spoke] [the sister of the child] [to Pharaoh’s daughter]: “[Shall I go] and call for you a nursing woman from among [the Hebrew women], who can nurse for you, the child?”

8 Answering her, Pharaoh’s daughter said, “Go.” [So she went off]—the maiden—and called on the mother of the child.

9 [Then there spoke] to her [the daughter of Pharaoh]: “[You must take now] the child here and nurse it for me, and I will pay your fee.” [And she did take him]—[the woman took up] the child, [and she nursed him].

10 [When he grew up]—[the child matured]—[she brought him] [to Pharaoh’s daughter], [and he became to her] a son.

She gave him a name: Moses, [while saying], [end aliyah] “because from the water, I pulled him out.”

2:11 [And it happened] in [those days], [when he was grown], Moses went out to his kinfolk and witnessed their labors. And he saw a man—an Egyptian—beating a Hebrew, [one of his kinsmen].

12 He turned this way and that, and saw: [there was no one] around. [He struck down] the Egyptian, [and hid him] in the sand.

13 He went out the next day, [and he beheld] two men of the Hebrews, fighting. He said to the offender, “Why do you strike your fellow?”

14 [And that one replied], “Who [set you up] as a man prince and a judge [over us]?”

[Is it to kill me] [that you so speak], just as you killed the Egyptian?” Being afraid, [Moses said], “Surely the thing is known.”

15 When Pharaoh heard of the matter, he sought to kill Moses, [and thus fled] Moses from the presence of Pharaoh. He made for the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came [to draw water] and to fill the water troughs, to water the flocks of their father.

17 But then came the shepherds [and drove them off]. [And rose up] Moses to defend them, and he watered their flock.

18 [When they came home] to Reuel, their father, [he asked of them], “[Why is it that you] so quickly came back today?”

19 [And they replied], “A man—an Egyptian—saved us from the hand of the shepherds. He even [drew for us] water, and watered our sheep.”

20 He asked his daughters, “[Where is he]?”

[Why is it] that you left the man? Summon him, and let him eat some bread.”

21 And Moses agreed to live with the man, [and Reuel gave] Tzipporah his daughter to Moses.

22 She gave birth to a son, and Moses gave him the name Gershom (“Sojourner there”), for he said, “A stranger I was in a foreign land.”

23 [And it happened], after many days—[during that time]—there died the king of Egypt. [And groaning they were]—[*B’nei Yisrael*]—from their labor, [and they cried out]. [Their wailing rose up]—[their pleas did go up]—to God, from the bondage.

24 And heard by *Elohim*, were their cries, and remembered by God was His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 God looked upon *B’nei Yisrael* [end aliyah] [and took notice]: [*Elohim* surely knew them].

3:1 Now Moses was shepherding—[tending the sheep] of Jethro his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led the flock to the edge of the desert, [and came] to the mountain of God (*ha Elohim*), to Horeb.

2 [And there did appear] [the angel of] YHWH [unto him] [in the flame of a fire] from the midst of a bush. [As he looked at it], he beheld that the bush was burning with fire, [but the bush itself] was not consumed.

3 Then said Moses, “[I will turn aside] and see this appearance— so great is this sight [to see why it is] that it doesn’t burn up—this bush.”

4 When saw YHWH that he went forth to look, God called—he was called by *Elohim* [from the inside] [of the bush]. God said, “Moses, Moses”. He answered, “Here I am.”

5 [And God said], “Don’t come near to here. [Take off your sandal] from off your foot, because the place of which you are standing [on it]—holy ground it is.”

6 [And God said], “I am the God of your father—[I am the God] of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then covered Moses his face, since he was afraid to gaze [upon God].

7 Then spoke YHWH: “I have seen—[yes I have seen]—the affliction of my people that is in Egypt. Their cry I have heard when facing their slave-drivers. I am aware of their pain.

8 [And so I have come down] [to deliver them] from the hand of Egypt. [I will bring them up] from that land to a land that is good and spacious, [to a land] that is flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite, of the Amorite and the Perizite, of the Hivite and the Yebusite.

9 [Even now], [know for a fact], the cry of *B’nei Yisrael* has come to me. [Also I have seen] the oppression with which *Mitzrayim* oppresses them.

10 So now [you go]: [I am sending you] to Pharaoh. [You shall bring] my people *B’nei Yisrael* out of Egypt.

11 Then said Moses to *ha Elohim*, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh—that [I should bring] the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

12 [And God said], “I will be there with you. It is for you a sign that it is I who have sent you, [when you have brought] the people out of Egypt. [You will offer worship] to *ha Elohim* on this very mountain.

3:13 Then responded Moses [to *ha Elohim*], “[And so] I myself [am to go] to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you.’ [They will ask me], ‘[What is His name]?’ What shall I say to them?”

14 Then replied *Elohim* to Moses, “I shall be what I shall be.”

[And God went on], “Thus you must say to *B’nei Yisrael*, ‘[I WILL BE THERE]’ (*Eh’yeh*) sends me to you.

15 [And God said]—*Elohim* spoke further to Moses—Thus [you must say] to the children of Israel: “YHWH, the God [of your fathers and mothers], the God of Abraham, and [the God of Isaac], and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.”

[This is My name] for the ages. [end aliyah] By this I am remembered through all generations.

16 Go [and bring together] the elders of Israel and say to them, “YHWH, the God of your ancestors appeared to me. [This was the God] [of Abraham], of Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I have noticed—I have surely [remembered you], and what is being done to you in Egypt.

17 [I now declare]: [I will] [bring you up] from the affliction of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanite and of the Hittite, of the Amorite and the Perizite, of the Hiyite and the Yebusite, [to a land] flowing with milk and honey.’ ”

18 They will listen to your voice. [Then you will go]—[you together] with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt. [You must say] to him: “YHWH, the God of the Hebrews came to meet us. [And so now] [do permit us to go], on a journey of three days in the desert to offer sacrifice to YHWH our God.”

19 “[But I, God], know—[this I know in advance]: [he will not] [give to you]—the king of Egypt—[leave to go], [not even] by a strong hand.

20 [So I will stretch out] my hand [and I will strike] Egypt with all of my wonders, which I will perform in their midst.

[After that], he will send you out.

21 [And I will give] favor to this people in the eyes of Egypt. It will be [that, when you go], you will not leave empty-handed.

22 There must ask each woman of her neighbor, [of her who dwells] in her house, [vessels of silver] and vessels of gold, and clothing. [You shall put them] on your sons and on your daughters. [This will be the spoils] of Egypt.

4:1 Then responded Moses, saying: “But they will not believe me. They will not listen to my voice. Indeed they will say, ‘There did not appear to you YHWH.

2 [And YHWH] [answered *Moshe*]. [God said], “What is this in your hand?” He replied, “a staff.”

3 God said, “Throw it to the ground.” He threw it to the ground, and it became a snake. And then fled Moses from before it.

4:4 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Stretch out your hand, and grasp it by its tail.”

[He stretched out] his hand and took hold [of it]. It became a staff in his hand.

5 [“That they might] believe [that there appeared] [to you] YHWH, the God of your ancestors.

[This was the God] [of Abraham], the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

6 [Then God went on], YHWH saying to him, “[Now do this] : Put your hand into your bosom.” And he brought his hand to his bosom, and took it back out. And he saw that his hand was leprous, like snow.

7 [And then God said], “Return your hand to your bosom.” So he returned his hand to his bosom.

[Then he took it back out] of his bosom, [and saw it restored] to normal flesh.

8 “And it will be, if they do not [believe you], and they do not heed the message of the sign [they saw first], [then they will believe] the message of the sign they see now.

9 [And this also shall be], if they [still do not believe]—[even then]—to these two signs [that they just saw], and they do not listen to your voice, then you will take some water from the Nile, [and pour it out] on dry land,

[and it will be] that the water that you take from the Nile will become blood [on the dry land].”

10 Then pleaded Moses [with YHWH], “[Please my Lord], [I by no means] a man of words [have ever been], either yesterday or even before, [nor even after] You spoke to Your servant. Indeed [heavy of mouth] and heavy of speech, am I.”

11 And spoke YHWH [in response to him], “Who is it [that makes the mouth] [for the human]?”

Indeed, who makes one mute or makes one deaf, or makes one sighted, or makes one blind? Is it not I, YHWH?

12 So now you must go. [I Myself] will be with your mouth [and instruct you] as to what you shall say.”

13 He answered, “Please my Lord, [send help] [through the hand of whom you send].”

14 Then flared up the anger of YHWH [against Moses]. He said, “Is there not Aaron your brother, the Levite?

[I know indeed] that one who speaks well is he. Moreover he is coming here [to meet you]. He will see you and be glad in his heart.

15 You shall speak [to him] and place the words in his mouth.

[I Myself] [will be with] your mouth [and with his mouth], and I [will instruct you] [as to what] you are to do.

16 He shall speak in your place to the people. He shall in fact be for you as a mouth, whereas you will be for him as a god.

4:17 The staff you have here, you will take in your hand. [end aliyah] You will perform with it, the miracles.”

18 Then went Moses—[he left to return] to Jether [his father-in-law]. He said to him, “Let me go—[this I do ask]—[and I will go back] to my kinsmen that are in Egypt, that I may see if they are still alive. [And he replied]: [Jethro said this] to Moses, “Go in peace.”

19 Then spoke YHWH to Moses in Midian, saying, “Go, return now to Egypt, since dead are all the men who sought your life.”

20 And so took Moses his wife [along with his sons], [and mounted them] on a donkey,

and returned to *Eretz Mitzraim*. [In addition], [Moses took] the staff of *Elohim*, in his hand.

21 And [spoke YHWH] to Moses, “[When you set out] to return to Egypt, [keep in your mind] [all the portents] that I have put in your hand. [You will perform them] before Pharaoh. I will harden his heart, so he will not free the people.

22 You must say [these words to Pharaoh]: ‘Thus says YHWH, “My son—my firstborn—is Israel.

23 So I [say this to you]: ‘[Send out] My son that he may serve Me. If you refuse [to let him go], then indeed [I Myself] will slay [your own son], your firstborn.’ ”

24 Now it was on the journey, at the encampment, he was met by YHWH, who sought to kill him.

25 Then took Tziporah [a knife made of stone] and cut off the foreskin of her son, and touched it to his feet, [and she said this]: “[This is because] [a bridegroom of blood] you are to me.”

26 [At this, God withdrew] from him. Then she exclaimed, “A bridegroom of blood, by circumcision.”

27 Then said YHWH to Aaron, “[You must go] to meet Moses in the wilderness.

[So Aaron set out], [and he met him] on the mountain of God, [and he kissed him].

28 [And related] Moses to Aaron, everything: all the words of YHWH, with which [God had sent him], and all the signs about which God had commanded him.

29 Then went off Moses, and Aaron, and they assembled all of the elders of the children of Israel.

30 And spoke Aaron, [telling them] [all of the words] that were spoken by YHWH to Moses.

And he performed the signs before the eyes of the people.

31 They were believed by the people. [When they truly had heard] that YHWH had remembered the children of Israel, and that [God had seen] their affliction, [end aliyah] [they bowed down] and did homage.

5:1 [Afterward] went Moses and Aaron, and said to Pharaoh, “[Thus says] YHWH, the God of Israel, ‘Send [my people out], that they may hold a festival for Me in the wilderness.’”

2 Replied Pharaoh, “Who is YHWH that I should listen to His voice, to send [Israel away]? I do not know YHWH, and as for Israel, I will not send them off.” *Stone Edition Tanach

3 So they said, “The God of the Hebrews happened upon us*. Let us go—[this is what we must ask]—[on a journey]: a trip of three days [in the wilderness] that we may sacrifice to YHWH our God, [lest He fall upon us] with pestilence or with sword.”

4 Responding to them, [spoke thus] [the king of Egypt]: “[Why is it], Moses and Aaron, that you distract the people, [from their tasks]? Get back to your labors!”

5 And further said Pharaoh, “Seeing that so many there are now—the people of the land—would you then have them cease [from their burdens]?”

6 Then commanded Pharaoh on that day, ordering the taskmasters among the people and their foremen, as follows:

7 “No [longer may you] provide [the straw that they need] [to the people] to make bricks, as you did in past days. They must go and gather for themselves—the straw.

8 But the amount of bricks [that they] were making up until now, you will impose [upon them]. Do not subtract from the number, | since shirkers are they. [This is the reason] that [they cry out], entreating, ‘[Allow us to go] so we can sacrifice to our God.’”

9 [Even heavier] [make the work that is done] by the people. [They must do it] [so they will show no regard] [to words of deceit].

10 So they went out—the taskmasters of the people and their foremen—and spoke to the people, as follows: “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘[I will not] provide for you straw,

11 [And so, you]: go! Get for yourselves straw from wherever [you can find it], since nothing [will be subtracted] [from your work]: [not one thing].’”

12 So they spread out—the people—over all Eretz-Mitzraim to collect gleanings for straw.

13 And the taskmasters [pressed them hard], saying “Finish your work: [the quota for the day], [in its day]—[the same as] when there was straw.”

14 [And they were beaten]—the foremen of B’nei Yisrael, [who had been] [set over them] by the taskmasters of Pharaoh, [and were asked], “[For what reason] [have you failed] to complete the quota of bricks as in days before, either yesterday or today?”

5:15 [And so they came]—the foremen of *B'nei Yisrael*—and cried out to Pharaoh, saying
 “[For what purpose] [are you doing a thing] like this to your servants,
 16 [when in fact, straw] [has not been] given to your servants? [And yet ‘Bricks!’]—this they say to us—[‘Make them!’]
 [And so it is] [that your servants] [are being beaten], and the fault is your people’s.
 17 [And Pharaoh replied], “*Shirkers* you are—just shirkers! That is why you keep saying, “ ‘Let us go so we can sacrifice to YHWH.
 18 And so now, go to your work! Straw I will *not* give to you. Your quota of bricks, [you will deliver].”
 19 [And they came to see]—the foremen [of *B'nei Yisrael*]—[that for themselves] [things were bad], by saying:
 “Don’t reduce your output of bricks! The quota for the day, in its day.”
 20 They encountered Moses and Aaron, [standing there] [to meet them] [as they came out] [from seeing Pharaoh].
 21 The foremen [said to them], “[May God see what you’ve done]—[may YHWH] [look upon you], and judge, [since you have caused us] to reek:
 [you brought *our* very smell] to the eyes of Pharaoh and to the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to kill us.”
 22 [And so he went back]—[Moses returned] to YHWH and said,
 “[O, my Lord] (*Adonai*), why [have you dealt so ill] with this people? Why for this, [have you sent me]?
 23 [For ever since] I [went to Pharaoh] to speak in Your name, [he has done evil] to this people.
 Yet you have not rescued—not delivered, Your people.”
 6:1 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh.
 For through a strong hand [he will send them out], and with a strong hand [end aliyah] [he will drive them] from his land.”

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta gersh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, gersh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)